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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ETRD](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [AE](#)  
SUBJECT: UAE PRIME MINISTER ON IRAN

REFS: A) ABU DHABI 138, B) ABU DHABI 130, C) ABU DHABI 126

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) UAE Prime Minister, Vice President, and Ruler of Dubai Mohammed bin Rashid (MbR) al-Maktoum used his newly-instituted web-based dialogue with the public to reply to a variety of questions on June 1. The official UAE news agency WAM released select replies, including a portion on Iran in reply to a questioner from Saudi Arabia. The WAM release included English translation, which in our reading tracks closely with the original.

¶2. (SBU) MbR's comments on Iran begin by noting that the UAE does not, in principle, interfere in the internal matters of other nations, adding that "Iran's nuclear program is an internal matter of the nation of Iran, as long as our brothers in Iran continue to reassure the world that the program is peaceful." He then cited the UAE goal of a WMD free Middle East. MbR reiterated the UAEG desire for a peaceful settlement to its territorial dispute with Iran (three islands), highlighting "long-standing" trade relations with Iran as not contradictory to the territorial dispute but in fact a normal situation between neighbors. "Trade relations between any two nations always lead to better relations and facilitate the resolution of conflicts. After all, is it easier to resolve your conflicts with friends or with enemies? Friendly relations allow nations to contain the issue and prevent having it develop into a crisis," which may in turn "allow third-parties to intervene and pursue their interests" at the expense of the primary parties.

¶3. (S/NF) MbR's comments project a tone of collegial trade with an almost benign neighbor whose promises about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program can be accepted at face value. On June 2 the Ambassador called UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) to clarify whether this was a true reflection of UAE foreign policy, stating that he was calling without instructions from Washington but out of concern for the tone projected by the official remarks. AbZ said his reading of the text suggested that Iran's pursuit of nuclear power was an internal matter only to the extent that it was "peaceful"; the text itself is clearly open to a much broader interpretation.

¶4. (S/NF) Comment: The UAE's balancing act on Iran policy is a well known phenomenon, with strong trade interests and the desire to avoid provocation that might lead to a confrontation weighed against real concerns among the leadership about Iran's intent. Part of that balancing act involves reconciling Dubai's overwhelmingly commercial focus with Abu Dhabi's more geopolitical orientation. In this case, MbR's Dubai centric vision clearly won out. While AbZ clearly felt compelled to defend the statements of his "boss" (at least according to a UAE Government organizational chart), it is doubtful he would have made these sorts of remarks himself. End comment.

OLSON